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SUBJECT: JORDAN: JANUARY 6 MEDIA REACTION TO GAZA SITUATION

¶1. SUMMARY: Jordanian media coverage today of developments in Gaza returned to sensational photos and news of civilian casualties and suffering caused by Israel's offensive. Coverage by major news outlets focused on deteriorating humanitarian conditions while the vituperative op-ed commentary sees time running out for a political solution. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Tuesday's newspapers and other major news outlets in Jordan led with photos of dead children, returning to Sunday's sensational themes of the casualties among the most vulnerable of Palestinian civilians. Extensive coverage in all major dailies focused on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, reportedly indicated by the increase in the numbers of civilian casualties, specifically children. The tone of the coverage was emotional. Under the headline "Israel Blockades Civilians and Kills Childhood," Al-Ghad newspaper summarized yesterday's clashes between Israeli Defense Forces and Hamas militants by stating that "Israel escalated the situation in Gaza yesterday by killing 50 Palestinians, among them 17 children." Hamas' launching of at least 35 rockets was also highlighted.

¶3. In this context, Queen Rania's public statements yesterday also received prominent play. Speaking at a press conference held by several UN officials visiting Jordan, she stated that "either the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not so universal, or the people of Gaza are not human beings, worthy of the same universal rights." The Queen pleaded for a "humanitarian ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip and urged governments to contribute to UNRWA's emergency appeal.

¶4. Covering public reaction, the dailies reported that a delegation of civil society organizations, led by labor union officials and Islamists, will head to Damascus today to meet Hamas political supremo Khaled Mishaal in a show of solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. Protests continued yesterday across the Kingdom. A tent near the Israeli Embassy in Amman drew significant media attention. Online news outlet Ammoun News reported that authorities had requested the removal of the tent, but that Interior Minister Eid al-Fayez later withdrew the request. In separate reports, Fayez was quoted as urging citizens to express their feelings "in a civilized manner."

¶5. Al-Arab Al-Yawm newspaper reported that prominent industrialists called for severing economic ties with Israel and "halting all forms of normalization" as an expression of solidarity with Gazans and as a protest against Israel's aggressive measures. The report quoted President of the Jordan Chamber of Industry Dr. Hatem Al-Halawani as urging the industrial sector to "sever all forms of cooperation with the Zionist entity." It also quoted President of the Jordanian Exporters Association Engineer Omar Abu Wishah as describing trade relations with Israel after the Gaza crisis as "a form of tampering with the abilities of the Arab people."

¶6. Editorial Commentary

-- "Rein in This Fascist Attack"

The main editorial in the January 6 edition of the leading, government-owned Arabic daily Al-Rai opines, "Enough hypocrisy. It

is time for the human conscience to arise and stand firmly to say to Israel enough. They must learn that history will not only be unmerciful towards this international silence over the massacre committed by the war criminals in Israel, but has always brought victory to the struggling people and has always indicated that occupation disappears sooner or later.... The fate of Olmert, Barak, Livni, and all the fascists who support their criminal campaign on Gaza will be in the dumpster of history."

-- "American Bias and European Silence Manifest in the Israelis' Barbaric Attack"

Columnist Abdullah Al-Qaq in the January 6 edition of the government-aligned, pro-Palestinian Arabic daily Ad-Dustour asserts, "In light of the excessive Israeli assaults against the Palestinians, the American and European practices and actions are considered blatant bias that contributes to giving Israel more time to continue its aggression, and in turn confirms to the people of the Arab and Muslim nations and to the whole world that human rights and international law and legitimacy are completely ignored at the international level.... It is clear that one of the objectives of the Israeli attacks is to divide up Gaza.... There is no hope for the Palestinians except to continue the resistance. We hope that Palestinians will pull in ranks against this aggression that is taking place with American support and under European silence."

-- "Let the 'Other Opinion' Be Quiet for a While"

Columnist Samer Khair Ahmad in the January 6 edition of the independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad comments, "Events in Gaza have taken a new turn, but viewpoints about this aggression are not decided by the Gaza events alone. The Palestinian cause, after

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sixty years of the Zionist occupation, has become very complicated, where viewpoints about any Palestinian event are not shaped by one single event, but rather by the repercussion of years of developments and events.... With regard to the Israeli aggression on Gaza, people understand the 'other opinion' that may call for calm with Israel or seek a political solution to the crisis, or resolve the conflict between Fatah and Hamas in a manner that restores the former's authority in Gaza, or other proposals that object to the methods of the resistance or doubt the feasibility of the confrontation with the Israeli army.... The person with the 'other opinion' may have good intentions and noble objectives. Those people with 'other opinions' who are concerned about the public good are required to be quiet for a while, especially under these circumstances. They must choose the place and time for making their opinions known, if they want their opinions to achieve public good."

-- "Serious Secrets about the Gaza War"

Columnist and Al-Jazeera Television correspondent Yaser Abu Hilala in the January 6 Al-Ghad inveighs, "It is not an unceasing war against Hamas, but rather a war against the Palestinian people. The world is fighting Gaza with its security council that has become a branch of the American State Department, which is itself involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict, as if Al-Qassam rockets are falling on Washington. In return, every Arab and Muslim feels that the house leveled to the ground is his own house and that every child killed is his own child. This is the real story. Everything else is a lie."

-- "About the Expectations of Victory and Defeat"

Columnist Jamil Nimri in the January 6 Al-Ghad argues, "This is not the type of war where victory or defeat is decided as in Arab wars with Israel and where the war ends with the defeat of one army and the victory of the other. The current formula in this confrontation defies every definition. What does it mean to bomb Gaza and destroy every stone in it? If the Israeli target is to 'eliminate' Hamas, then this is an impossible goal, because it is a popular political organization, and because for every martyr, ten others will join it.

As such and if Israel seeks this goal, then its defeat is certain. But Israel is not saying that. Rather, it proposes vague formulas

for its goals, like changing the security reality in the south. If stopping the rockets is the objective, then there was no need for a war, but rather political mediation and resolving the issue of the siege.... Behind this vagueness, the Israelis seem to have a political plan more complicated than achieving a specific 'victory' in a battle. Israel had no problem with Gaza's split from Ramallah.

If anything, it was an additional free gift in the context of its constant hatred for the birth of an independent Palestinian national entity. Yet, the growing power of Hamas and its armament probably made Israel believe that an unsafe military force supported by enemy forces like Iran was gaining ground. And so started the plan that is being implemented now. Israel does not say anything about the objectives of its ground offensive. Yet it is clear that it is the occupation of certain areas in the north and splitting Gaza in half."

-- "Jordan and Palestine"

Chief editor Taher Odwan in the January 6 edition of the independent, opposition Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm predicts, "If the government undertakes a conclusive action, like expelling the Zionist ambassador, popular support for this decision would be comprehensive and powerful. The one thing that all Jordanians agree upon today is that what is going on against Gaza must stop immediately and that the outcomes of continuing this aggression go beyond Gaza's border and may constitute an imminent danger on neighboring countries. The brutality of the aggression proves that Israel is a racist country and that agreements signed with it are not worth the ink they are written in, because the first condition in all these treaties and agreements is for Israel to be part of comprehensive peace. Since Israel is wiping out this peace with its wars and crimes, the Arab-Zionist conflict goes back to fateful crossroads and options that Arab may have to resort to if the disaster continues."

BEECROFT